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AUTHOR Elias, Kristina M.
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine whether the use of voice as defined by writing theorists is essential to producing good student writing and whether peer interaction would help students gain a greater sense of voice in their writing. Forty-two high school juniors were divided into two clusters: a peer interaction group and a teacher-centered group. Two writing assignments were given during the 6-week period, and six types of assessment determined the quality of writing: (1) holistic scoring for quality, (2) holistic scoring for voice, (3) rating voice for essays parsed by T-unit, (4) counting the number of writing convention errors, (5) counting the number of spelling errors, and (6) assigning a handwriting legibility score on a 4-1 scale. The results showed that the quality of writing differed significantly between the two groups. The correlation procedure indicated a significant relationship between writing graded for quality and writing graded for voice when papers from both clusters were grouped together. There was also a significant relationship between quality writing and voiced writing when peer group papers were evaluated by group members, but there was no relationship between quality writing and voiced writing when writing from the teacher-centered cluster was evaluated by members of the group. The peer interaction group made fewer errors on their final papers and demonstrated better handwriting. The results suggest that teachers should study the elements of voice in writing and develop peer interaction lessons to teach it. (HTH)

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PEER INTERACTION:

A METHOD OF CREATING VOICE IN WRITING

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Dr. Kristina M. Elias
572 Storrs Road
Mansfield Center, Connecticut 06250

English Chairwoman
Farmington High School
Farmington, Connecticut 06032
(203) 423-4342

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PEER INTERACTION:

A METHOD OF CREATING VOICE IN WRITING

Much of the recent research in writing attempts to manipulate and analyze the relationship a writer has with the writing he/she produces. It is widely hypothesized that when a writer has a grasp of his purpose in writing, an understanding of the audience to whom he is addressing the writing and an essence of commitment or voice which he or she is using to convey that message, that the protocol produced by the writer will be of greater essence and merit than writing which is randomly assigned without addressing the former issues.

This study did not attempt to address these concepts in global terms. Instead, it was the purpose of this study to investigate that small part of the total picture which deals with the ability of students to perceive and consciously integrate a sense of personal commitment and vigor in writing which is essential to both narrative and dispassionate prose. Modern rhetoricians refer to this identification of self with text as creating <u>voice</u> in writing. This study, moreover, investigated peer interaction as methodology to improve both writing and writing attitudes.

To elaborate on the former, Miller and Judy (1978) tell us that the one constant running through all good writing is the "distinctive human accent transferred from the depths of self to

the blank sheet of paper" (p. 15). Accent is an element of speech. The transferral of verbal to written speech desires a facsimile of spoken intonation, adds Glyn (1972, p. 77). Without this intonation, the writing bears no ". . . aura of a writer's personal engagement . . ." and often results in a ". . . sense of vagueness and artificiality . . ." in writing (Maxwell, 1979, p. 12). Dixon (1968), Emig (1971), Button (1965), and Elbow (1978) all concur on this same proposal: that students who have a sense of their own voices are better writers than students who lack the ability or instruction to create voice in writing.

Bruffee (1980) also contributed to the rationale of this research. He developed writing curriculum with peer interaction at its core, and collected data to analyze the merit of the technique. Bruffee felt that peer interaction was possibly the single writing activity that students took seriously. He also indicated that students could set plans of writing action for other students with greater expectancy and assurance of change than could teachers.

Intrigued by whether the concept of voice could be addressed, taught or assessed and encouraged by Hawkins' (1980) and Gebhardt's assurance that peer interaction allows writers a sense of feedback when writing, which is more encouraging and risk-taking than student-teacher interaction, this investigator brought the validity and usefulness of both positions into experimental interplay through this demonstration research.

PURPOSE The purpose of this study was to question if the use of voice as defined by writing theoreticians is essential or helpful to producing good writing among students. Secondly, the investigator wanted to know if the method of peer interaction would help students to gain a greater sense of voice in their writing and, peripherally, the study sought to add to a growing pool of information regarding how penmanship, spelling errors and errors in accepted writing conventions might bias raters of writing.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY A group of 42 Coventry, Connecticut high school juniors, having some ability in literate speaking and writing, were chosen for the study. They were members of two groups which had been participating in an equally demanding literature/writing program for several months before being chosen for the study. It was Coventry's guidance judgment that the two groups were of relatively equal ability. When the investigator joined the groups, she randomly assigned one cluster as a peer interaction group and the other as a teacher-centered group to serve as comparison.

PROCEDURE To accommodate the major purposes of the study which was to test the effect of voice that both peer-instructed and teacher-centered groups produce on writing quality, the investigator taught six classes, one day a week for six weeks to both classes.

The goals of both clusters were equal. Both were working to define and develop voice in writing. The dissimilarity between the two groups existed in the nature of the instruction.

THE NATURE OF THE INSTRUCTION

	Peer-Centered Group	Teacher-Centered Group
Day 1	Teacher lecture explaining voice. Models read aloud. Discussion of voice in models in small groups.	Teacher lecture explaining voice. Models read silently. Teacher led discussion of voice in models.
Day 2	Read "A Writer's Attitude" for homework. Discussed their reaction in small groups, then large groups via tape. Writing assignment given.	Read "A Writer's Attitude" for homework. Silently looked over the reading in class. Teacher asked questions about reading. Answers were placed on board. Writing assignment given for homework. Students read more models.
Day 3	Students read one another's papers in small groups. Students discussed how they'd worked for voice via tape. Papers were handed in for commentary. Students read own transcription and reacted.	Students self evaluated papers using teacher instrument. Students handed in paper. Teacher lectured on details in writing that create voice. Models were used.
MID-WEEK:	Mid-week papers were returned to students; students were asked to rewrite for Day 4.	
Day 4	Students sat in small groups and read revision. Students read "Sharpening." Remained in small group; gave one another revision advice. Started writing in class.	Papers were returned to students. Several paragraphs were shared on transparency. Class revision ensued. Students read "Sharpening" quietly. Students started rewrite.
Day 5	Students wrote in class. They could consult peers or teacher.	Students wrote in class. They could consult teacher.
Day 6	Final papers shared in small groups. Students edited one another's work. Oral evaluation in large group via tape.	Final papers handed in. Students volunteer to have their papers read. Students prepared written evaluation of sessions.

During both procedures, two independent, non-participant observers documented all classroom activities.

DATA
INTERPRETATION When the procedure was completed, the experimenter gathered data inherent to the problem via two methods: first, by statistics, and second, by analysis of observation and documentation.

Six types of assessment determined the quality of writing: 1) holistic scoring for quality, 2) holistic scoring for voice, 3) rating voice for essays parsed by T-unit, 4) counting the number of writing convention errors, 5) counting the number of spelling errors, and 6) assigning a handwriting legibility score on a 4-1 scale.

All research sessions were also documented by two non-participant observers. The observers provided information about student understanding of the concept of voice, attitude changes toward writing, quality and quantity of student-with-student interaction, enthusiasm participation level and types of activities exhibited by both members of the peer-interaction and teacher-centered groups.

Writing a voiced paper entitled A Moment or Event that Changed or Affected My Life was the assignment given to both groups. It was hoped that the nature of the instruction would create several findings.

First, if the quality of writing differed significantly between the peer-interaction and teacher-centered groups, groups of comparable characteristics, then the variable of peer-interaction via tapes or teacher centeredness might be responsible for the different results in writing.

Secondly, if the quality of writing differed significantly between papers which are voiced and papers lacking in voice, then the variable of voice might be responsible for the differing results.

Thirdly, if the quality of voice differed significantly between papers which are written by peer-interaction and teacher-centered groups, then the variable of the methodologies used in either peer-interaction via tapes group or teacher-centered group might be responsible for the significance.

Finally, raters, whether grading essays produced by the peer-interaction or teacher-centered group, or essays possessing or lacking the quality of voice, might be affected by covariables. The covariates: writing convention errors, spelling, and handwriting might change or affect the evaluation of any of the rated essays.

RESULTS Using a partial correlation procedure the statistics indicated that there is a significant relationship between writing graded for quality and writing graded for voice, when papers from both clusters are grouped together (see Table 1). There is also a significant relationship between quality writing and voiced writing when peer group papers are statistically evaluated by themselves (Table 2). But there is no significant relationship between quality writing and voiced writing when writing from the teacher-centered cluster is statistically evaluated by itself (Table 3).

Using an analysis of covariance procedure, means of papers graded for the primary trait of voice were compared. This

Table 1

Means (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Correlation Coefficients (r), Adjusted Correlation Coefficients (r_a), Levels of Significance ($p <$), and Adjusted Levels of Significance ($p <_a$), from Partial Correlations Indicating Interrelationships of Holistic Ratings with Holistic Ratings for Voice, Holistic Ratings with T-units Rated for Voice and Holistic Ratings for Voice with T-units Rated for Voice. Three Partial Correlations are Presented: 1) for Peer-Interactive Group only, 2) for Teacher-Centered Group, and 3) for Both Groups Analyzed Together.

			PARTIAL CORRELATION (Both Groups)			
Variable	M	SD	r	r_a	$p <$	$p <_a$
Holistic Scoring	2.8095	0.8036	0.6197	0.4928	0.0000*	0.001*
Voice Scoring Holistically	2.7024	0.8629				
Holistic Scoring	2.8095	0.8036	0.3253	0.2138	0.018*	0.099
Voice Parsed by T-unit	2.3333	0.6687				
Voice Scored Holistically	2.7024	0.8629	0.4614	0.3553	0.001*	0.014*
Voice Parsed by T-unit	2.3333	0.6687				

*$p < 0.05$ = Significance Level

Table 2

Means (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Correlation Coefficients (r), Adjusted Correlation Coefficients (r_a), Levels of Significance ($p <$), and Adjusted Levels of Significance ($p <_a$), from Partial Correlations Indicating Interrelationships of Holistic Ratings with Holistic Ratings for Voice, Holistic Ratings with T-units Rated for Voice and Holistic Ratings for Voice with T-units Rated for Voice. Three Partial Correlations are Presented: 1) for Peer-Interactive Group only, 2) for Teacher-Centered Group, and 3) for Both Groups Analyzed Together

PEER-INTERACTION GROUP

Variable	M	SD	r	r_a	$p <$	$p <_a$
Holistic Scoring	2.8333	0.7638	0.6679	0.6814	0.000*	0.001*
Voice Scored Holstically	2.8905	0.9148				
Holistic Scoring	2.83333	0.7638	0.4323	0.4803	0.025*	0.025*
Voice Parsed by T-units	2.2857	0.6814				
Voice Scored Holistically	2.8095	0.9148	0.5328	0.4427	0.006*	0.038*
Voice Parsed by T-units	2.2857	0.6814				

*$p < 0.05$ = Significance Level

Table 3

Means (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Correlation Coefficients (r), Adjusted Correlation Coefficients (r_a), Levels of Significance ($p <$), and Adjusted Levels of Significance ($p <_a$), from Partial Correlations Indicating Interrelationships of Holistic Ratings with Holistic Ratings for Voice, Holistic Ratings with T-units Rated for Voice and Holistic Ratings for Voice with T-units Rated for Voice. Three Partial Correlations are Presented: 1) for Peer-Interactive Group only, 2) for Teacher-Centered Group, and 3) for Both Groups Analyzed Together

TEACHER-CENTERED GROUP

Variable	M	SD	r	r_a	$p <$	$p <_a$
Holistic Scoring	2.7857	0.8598	0.5850	0.2529	0.003*	0.164
Voice Scored Holistically	2.5952	0.8158				
Voice Scored Holistically	2.5952	0.8158	0.4112	0.2827	0.032*	0.136
Voice Parsed by T-unit	2.3810	0.6690				
Holistic Scoring	2.7857	0.8598	0.2359	0.0166	0.152	0.475
Voice Parsed by T-units	2.3810	0.6690				

*$p < 0.05$ = Significance Level

comparison resulted in a p 0.096 level of seignificance (at the p 0.05 level). While this difference is not significant at an arbitrarily set level, the significance finding is acutely close to the level set in the research and indicates that voice may be better taught via peer interaction than via teacher-centered activity.

Finally, the same analysis was used to determine the difference in means of papers graded holistically for writing quality and difference in means of papers parsed by T-unit and judged by T-unit for presence of voice. The first comparison resulted in p 0.927 level of significance; the second evidenced a p 0.358 level. Neither comparison was significant at the p 0.05 level. This indicated that perhaps the type of instruction made no difference between the quality of writing produced in both clusters. This finding does not indicate that voice and quality have nothing in common. It instead ignores voice altogether and indicates that quality of writing in both groups does not differ significantly.

Secondly, the results also indicate that voice judged by T-unit does not differ between the groups.

The findings appear, to a degree, contradictory, but a closer look at the findings make the mixed findings extremely plausible.

INTERPRETATION OF STATISTICAL RESULTS

The significance of the experiment is found in the statistics provided by the partial correlation procedure. The data indicate a strong relationship between writing quality and voice measured by both holistic ratings in the peer-

interaction group. In the teacher-centered group the writings indicate no significant relationship at the $p < 0.05$ level between voice and quality. However, none of the comparisons of means of scores appear significant in the analysis of variance procedure.

The complex effect of three covariates--handwriting, spelling, and writing conventions--on the holistic assessment may account for the apparent discrepancy. When raw covariate data are summed, it is obvious that the teacher-centered group has many more mechanical and syntactic errors than the peer-interaction group. Writing convention errors totalled 341. Spelling errors totalled 100 and penmanship quality evidenced ten at 3 quality (readable but not excellent), seven at 2 (fair) and five at 1 (messy and difficult to read). The peer-interaction group totalled 105 writing convention errors and only 29 spelling errors. Scores in penmanship included two 4s, eleven 3s, seven 2s and only one 1.

Raw scores thus indicate that the peer-interaction group made fewer errors on their final papers; they also demonstrated better handwriting. These data make a strong case for special care students took with final products. If the groups were of equal ability to begin with, their error counts should have been comparable. The teacher-centered group, however, made triple the number of spelling and writing convention errors and received lower scores on penmanship. These numbers seem convincing evidence of a more careless attitude by the teacher-centered students.

Furthermore, the inability of raters to rid themselves of biases of penmanship, spelling errors and writing convention

errors brings the reliability and validity of holistic rating into question.

Mean scores of holistic rating adjusted for the covariates suggest that the peer-interaction group apparently scored better than the teacher-centered group. Peer papers, rated on a 4 to 1 scale, averaged 2.81 when rated for voice and 2.83 when rated for quality. On the other hand, the teacher-centered papers reported a 2.60 mean for voice and 2.79 for quality. As indicated by these unadjusted scores, it is possible that the peer group work does have more of a positive effect on writing than does the teacher-centered method. However, the influence of rater biases is so strongly reflected that a conventional interpretation of the holistic scores is not credible. For instance, it is impossible under the conditions of this study to describe reasons for errors in penmanship, spelling and grammar. How many of the penmanship ratings, spelling successes or errors and writing convention successes or errors can be attributed to maturation implied and inspired by methodology and how many are the result of the immediate unmeasured circumstances of the moment? How many of the successes or failures can be attributed to varying talents? Partial correlation implies that peer work made the difference.

Taking only peer work papers into account, quality and voice adjusted for penmanship ratings, spelling errors, writing convention errors are all related significantly. The teacher-centered group exhibits no such significant relationships. It is clear that rater biases affect means.

A second essential finding in the raw data analysis is that regardless of rater biases and covariate adjustment, when all 42 papers are summed together, the average quality rating score is 2.81 and average voice scores is 2.70. The writing of 42 students is relatively good. These results suggest that regardless of teaching method, that quality writing is voiced writing.

Subsequent to this experiment, the investigator found in an unpublished dissertation (Plasse, 1981) that voice may be divided into negative voice and positive voice. That is, raters may be negatively or positively influenced by the sentiment and ardor of strongly voiced writings. One student, Karen, shrewdly stated in the qualitative transcript that ". . . there are people who are going to read a paper that's going to have somebody's voiced opinion and they're not going to like that opinion" or the voice. Perhaps Karen's intuitive impressions may help to explain the findings. Raters may holistically rate essays favorably or unfavorably depending on their disagreement or agreement with vehemently voiced ideas. Plasse found that audiences react negatively more often to voice writing with which they do not agree than with voice writing they favor.

If what Plasse says is valid, then the lack of mean significance at the $p < 0.05$ level and the contradiction in evidence found in the partial correlation and analysis of variance may be attributable to the fact that raters did not take negative voice into account when rating.

Raters are often in disagreement with the sentiments of the author. The rater may penalize the writer with whom he/she disagrees despite the presence of a strong voice. On the other hand, he/she may reward a writer whose voice is weaker but whose sentiments are more acceptable to the rater's tastes. Abilities and experiences of the raters may influence performance. Both the holistic scorings for quality and voice were done by one rater with a minimum of ten years experience and another rater of less than two years of professional experience. The experienced graders gave more 4s and 3s than did the inexperienced graders. The investigator also had to mediate seven scores that were more than a single unit apart. Again, the higher grades of these seven were given by experienced graders. This may indicate that there is a difference in the definition of quality and voice as understood by more and less experienced raters.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study reveals a significant relationship between writing quality and the use of voice in writing. It is suggested, then, that teachers should study the elements of voice as expounded by Kinneavy (1971), Moffett (1976), Britton (1975), Elbow (1973), and Stewart (1972) and explore methodologies which best impart this information to students. In accordance with findings, teachers should develop peer interaction lessons to teach voice. Revision and editing processes, too, should be applied to the teaching of voice. The peer-interaction group had two-thirds

fewer spelling and writing convention errors than did the teacher-centered group. This may be due to peer editing.

Covariates of penmanship, spelling errors and writing convention errors significantly change the complexion of the ratings. This indicates that teachers must be made aware of their own biases. Assessment practices which take these biases into account should be developed. Not only teachers but students, too, must be made aware of these biases. Students, aware of teacher biases, may assume and use the proper weaponry to deal with built-in rater prejudices.

This quantitative findings also imply several avenues of research. First, positive and negative voice components should be defined and tested via holistic ratings. The extent of rater biases with regard to penmanship, spelling error and writing convention error should be tested with larger groups of students and certainly larger groups of raters to provide both validity and reliability for the finding in this demonstration study.

A third possible direction for research is to repeat the study with a greater variety of student abilities. Possible future questions might include: Is peer interaction a viable teaching method for average and slower groups? Would the interrelationships of variables provide the same results? Will quality of writing become appreciably better in average and slower groups if students can be taught to use appropriate voice in their writings? And finally, can the elements of voice be taught to average and slower students?

QUALITATIVE DATA

This study generated qualitative data in three ways. First, non-participant observers provided information in observation logs. The observers attended and documented all sessions of both clusters. They made observations of activities, statements and attitudes in both classes. They interpreted these shortly after the observations and some hours later wrote reflective statements on the observations and interpretations. Secondly, peer-interaction groups conversations and evaluations were taped and transcribed. Thirdly, the teacher-centered group wrote evaluations of class procedures and assignments.

NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVER DATA

A summation of the observer logs provides three basic findings. First, all students, whether peer-oriented or teacher-centered, enjoyed lessons about voice in writing. Support for this statement exists in logs which detail the fact that both groups were "sincere and interested" in the lessons. As time passed, the observers noted that both groups were willing to revise their writings and both groups exhibited a sense of pride in their final product.

The other two observations demonstrate differences between the two groups. Despite the fact that they enjoyed and were interested in the lessons, both observers stated, independently, that the teacher-centered students were "lethargic" or "passive" in their listening. They had only fifty to sixty percent voluntary vocal participation in the class sessions. On the other hand, the peer group had approximately ninety-five percent student participation

all lessons and in general appeared lively and excited. One may wonder if lethargy and enjoyment are compatible. However, the reports do not precisely specify the degree of either, suggesting, in fact, the observations may be credible.

Finally, the observers felt that the peer-interaction group had made some strides in the area of writing attitude. That is, they verbalized their writing problems, successes, and apprehensions to one another. In so doing, they seemed to provide a form of group writing therapy for one another which was not evident in the teacher-centered class. The observers apparently felt that even if the quality of writing and voice in the peer group was not significantly different from the quality and voice in writing of the teacher-centered group, the attitude toward writing had improved in the peer group. The observers felt it was impossible to estimate any change in writing attitude in the teacher-centered group.

NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVER DATA: IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PROCEDURE AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Observers indicated that students in both groups enjoyed the voice lessons. Students felt they communicated their own, rather than someone else's, impressions of the world. Most said they had never before heard of voice, audience, or purpose. This indicates that perhaps English teachers are so involved with teaching proper form and style that they have lost sight of the essence of writing, which reflects interplay of writer, purpose, and audience. This information implies that English teachers must become familiar with and work to prepare writing lessons which emphasize the age-old rhetorical triad of voice, audience, and purpose.

Secondly, if maximum participation is a goal of classroom activity, then certainly the observers have indicated that peer interaction activates more students than teacher-centered teaching. By investing planning time and inventing peer-interaction scenarios teachers may excite and motivate greater numbers of students in the writing classroom.

Perhaps future research should include study of peer interaction as it relates to writing attitude and peer-interaction experiments with varied age groups, learning abilities, and grade levels.

PEER INTERACTION TRANSCRIPTS

Interaction transcripts originally spoken by students provide much information about writing processes experienced by students. Two major strands which emerged were: insights regarding the importance of talking about writing with peers and revision discussions.

Students reported that their writing is molded and geared by their teachers' opinions. One student said, "I find myself writing exactly what he (the teacher) things. . . . A lot of teachers are easy to B.S. You just write anything down, throw in a few facts and then for the rest you can throw around absolutely nothing."

Another student said, ". . .The stuff I write for teachers is B.S.; I try to get a good grade." A third student, on the same topic, said, "I don't think when you write for an assignment that it means anything to you. . . . If you don't put feelings or opinions into something you write, I don't think anybody else can

understand or appreciate your paper." While only three quotes were chosen to represent the general student sentiment in the early transcripts, the tapings indicate that twelve of twenty-one students discussed these same issues. The observer logs indicate that those not specifically participating did a lot of agreeing, head nodding, and active listening. The transcripts imply that students feel they do not write to communicate their own ideas but instead to communicate the ideas and opinions of their respective teachers. They seemed to indicate that school writing assignments had nothing to do with developing a sense of communication in writing. The peer group claims that teachers never include voice and audience consideration in writing assignments. Transcripts also provided no evidence that teachers are aware of these elements as described by modern theorists and experts.

In one written reaction to a transcription, a student stated, "I thought it was really good to talk about how we feel on the subject of writing. It helps to know that other people have the same deep down fears that I have." One student stated, "It was the first time anybody asked me how I felt about how I write. It was nice to know that my opinion counts. All those heads shaking yes while I was talking really encouraged me about my writing." Another student stated, "I'll think twice before I B.S. when I write. I think that writing for ourselves became important because of our discussion." A final reaction to tapings in terms of enjoyment and need was, "I knew something had been missing in my compositions and I don't consider my writing extremely good but

by putting voice into my paper, I found it added something. I look forward to more discussion in class . . . to help me in future writing assignments."

The transcripts also provided information about how the peer group regarded revision. During the first and second tapings, students vehemently argued against revision. "I'm afraid of rewriting because I feel like if I start to rewrite something . . . the meaning of what I say is going to be changed." Observers independently noted that students balked at the idea of revision. They felt it to be time-consuming and wasteful. Furthermore, they did not know how to do it. Later transcripts differed from early ones. One student said, "I learned that you can't just make one copy. You do it until it's right. . . . At first, I didn't like that but as I watched it get better each time, it didn't bother me as much." Another girl said, "As much as I resented it at first, I learned something about the writing process . . . by writing and rewriting my rewrite . . . I could see the improvement." Finally, one student said, "The rewrites, at first, I really hated . . . but when I found out how to do it, I didn't mind as much." When students shared their feelings toward revision, an avalanche effect took hold. Approximately sixty percent expressed interest in writing another paper and revising it in order to, as Shawn put it, ". . . learn a lot more."

PEER INTERACTION TRANSCRIPTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PROCEDURE AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Peer group students indicated that they initially wrote to please the teacher and for the grade. If a turnabout in "teacher pleasing" is to be effected, teachers must work: to help students construct their own ideas, to please themselves rather than teachers, and to communicate rather than to write to pass. Perhaps teachers should not grade papers, but instead discuss communication problems and make suggestions for improvement. Perhaps students should choose, out of many of their writings, several which they feel are worthy to be graded. Indeed, this implies a change in curricular structure: establishment of conference periods and writing activities. These experiences take time and a good deal of one-on-one activity.

Students also indicated a great sense of relief and excitement when hearing their peers speak about their writing attitudes and about how their peers worked to satisfy given writing assignments. Perhaps the most important single idea suggested by this research is that class time be provided by teachers for talk about writing. These students became aware of mutual problems, took advice from one another and copied practices that seemed to work for their peers. They also learned to trust one another's judgment and became more willing to take advice from their peers. The teacher then has more time to teach rather than be the only one through whom information is transmitted. This action then may be both therapeutic and time saving for teachers.

Students also felt that revision was good when they understood how to revise. Perhaps a methodology explaining revision deserves greater emphasis in writing classrooms. Some suggestions are paper commentary couched in the form of advice to improve content, word elimination games and respect for the words the student originally writes, shown by not marking the original text. Emphasizing meaning and syntax while ignoring spelling and minor writing convention errors until final drafts may strengthen student understanding and respect for content, writing as a means of conveying ideas. Many teachers claim to do this already, but if we look to the research, we find that penmanship, spelling errors, and writing convention errors significantly confound holistic ratings.

There are also some implications for future research. First, the implications of writing therapy should be explored. Students may need psychological as well as academic encouragement in order to progress in writing. Secondly, research may shed light on the revision techniques that are appropriate for students of varied abilities. All levels and ages of students must be involved in research to ascertain when revision skills should be begun and when and with whom varying revision techniques are most successful.

TEACHER-CENTERED DATA

The final form of qualitative data was written evaluations and descriptions elicited from the teacher-centered group. The most repeated written comments were, "I enjoyed the subject matter very much," ". . . learning about my

voice is fun," and ". . . this is the first time someone actually taught me how to write a paper instead of assigning me a paper." About seventy-five percent of the comments reflected these sentiments. Students varied somewhat in the way they reported their opinions. One said, "The topic was a change from what we usually do in English. We usually have to just write papers without knowing how." Another said, "Writing is less boring now," while a third remarked, "I enjoyed my own thoughts in writing; my voice made my paper more interesting and exciting for me."

A second area that stands out in the evaluation pertains to investigator/teacher written responses on student papers. Student statements included, "I liked the commentary because it showed what I had to change to improve my paper." Another said, "Commentary always supported criticism with a solution or advice to change what was wrong; that's fair. Some teachers write 'weak paragraph' or 'poor opening.' I really don't know where to go from there." Another approached the subject in this say, "I wasn't just writing another English paper. I got interested because I thought it was nice that you took the time to really read everything and give advice." In general, teacher comments which indicated <u>how</u> rather than <u>what</u> to change were applauded.

Other interesting comments which were repeated in nine out of twenty-one evaluations was that perhaps ". . . it would be a good idea to give kids a chance to see what their friends are thinking about their writing. It also helps the teacher know where they're at." Another said, "We should have seen more examples of students'

writing." A third said, ". . . writing is a sharing, learning experience, more than a lecture experience." Without any prodding whatsoever, students felt a need to do more sharing with their peers.

TEACHER-CENTERED WRITTEN EVALUATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM AND FURTHER RESEARCH

If voice made students enjoy their own writing, the teaching implication is obvious. Voice should be taught. Enjoyment is essential to whole-hearted participation in writing process and production.

Secondly, suggestions for how teachers should respond to papers is also apparent. Criticism without concrete suggestions for revision is not useful to students. Specific tactics and adequate time are needed to provide revision advice.

It is obvious that updated teacher education, teacher talent and time begin to address these problems. Perhaps administrators and communities, in general, need to reevaluate time schedules.

Finally, the groups' comments also indicate that peer interaction warrants further research. The methodology of peer interaction transfers historically accepted teacher responsibility into the hands of students. Questions which need research include: on a long-term basis, how effective can student intervention be in writing education? What must be done to counteract student unwillingness to enter into peer relationships? Over long periods of time, will student evaluation be as important as teacher evaluations? Can peer interaction work with slower groups? What

are the long-term sociological and civic implications, if any, of peer interaction? What are the long-term sociological and civic implications of teacher-centered education?

CONCLUSION In light of all the findings in this study, both researchers and teache-s must take seriously peer interaction as a teaching methodology and voice as an essential element in developing writing competency.

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